

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2021

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Courant Community | Thursday, December 9, 2021

Courant Community

LOCAL NEWS

Rockville takes Battle of Route 83



Ellington quarterback Zachary Killoran tries to get out of the grasp of Rockville lineman Henry Tyus, Jr. Story, more photos, pages 8-9. STEVE SMITH/COURANT COMMUNITY

LOCAL NEWS



School bullying is in the spotlight in many places, including Manchester.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Manchester parents discuss bullying

Superintendent Matt Geary said he will work on a presentation about school climate and culture. **Page 7**

LOCAL NEWS

Dairy farm taps into energy markets

It's a common farm odor, but for Ellington's Oakridge Dairy, cow manure is the smell of money. **Page 3**

LOCAL NEWS

Glastonbury to get sidewalk additions

The Town Council unanimously approved a plan to add sidewalks on several town streets. **Page 5**

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Memory Tree on FUMC lawn honors loved ones

VERNON — STAFFORD SPRINGS — The 7th annual Community Memory Tree on the front lawn at First United Methodist Church, 8 Church St., is returning. To help the church turn all the multicolored lights to clear lights by Christmas Eve, donate \$5 per name.

Donations may be mailed to the church with your name and name of the person you are honoring. Checks may be made out to FUMC. All proceeds benefit Mission Shares. Call 860-684-2468 or email officefumcstafford@gmail.com for more information.

Hope on the Hill celebration taking place

SOUTH WINDSOR — The South Windsor Community Women's Club, in conjunction with the South Windsor Recreation Department, are lighting up Porter's Hill on Saturday, Dec. 11.

The Hope on the Hill event is a non-denominational celebration of hope for the holidays. Residents can purchase five luminaria bags with battery operated tea lights to set out on their driveway or porch while sponsoring an additional five bags to go on the hill for \$20. Email info@swcwclub.org for more information or to purchase in advance.

Caroling and cocoa and other surprises will take place from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. at Nevers Road Park and see Porter's Hill light up with hope as the night falls.

Veteran's Coffee Hour taking place each month

SOUTH WINDSOR — On the third Thursday of the month at 9 a.m., the Veteran's Coffee Hour will take place at the South Windsor Community Center, 150 Nevers Road.

Visit with other veterans, meet new friends and connect with old. The December coffee hour is on the 16. Coffee and goodies will be available. Call Ken Lewis at 860-416-5276 with questions.

Affordable housing program taking place virtually

GLASTONBURY — TALK, Truth in Action

with Love & Kindness, will present a presentation of Glastonbury Affordable Housing 101: the Housing Authority's and Town Government's Roles in Making It Happen, via Zoom at 6:30 p.m. Monday, Dec. 13.

Carl Stenman, chairman of the Housing Authority of the Town of Glastonbury Commissioners, will provide an overview of the Housing Authority's mission with affordable rental housing including oversight, staffing, budget, and portfolio of properties; and discuss how low-income tax credits and a housing trust fund might be used to expand affordable housing.

Neil Griffin, executive director of the Housing Authority of the Town of Glastonbury, will discuss the Housing Authority's role in acquiring property and developing and/or rehabilitating affordable and assisted housing, with Center Village as an example; how the Housing Authority runs its properties and accepts applications; and how Section 8 vouchers might be used to move into Glastonbury.

Rebecca Augur, director of Glastonbury Planning & Land Use Services, will outline the roles of the Community Development — Planning & Environmental division and other town agencies in reviewing and approving residential development projects; and explain how the public can provide input on affordable housing matters.

Visit <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89566075913?pwd=cVRkSWRrbG1BRm0xeDJiVFIyODRZZz09> to join the Zoom program. Email prez@talk-action.org to request the link via email.

Mental illness support groups taking place

MANCHESTER — The National Alliance on Mental Illness of Manchester will hold its regular Family Support meetings on the first and third Thursdays of the month at 7 p.m. The meetings are open to all families and friends of people with mental illness. For more information, contact Tina at 860-906-7385. Groups will be held via Zoom, unless otherwise indicated.

The Young Adult Support Group (ages 18 to 29) will hold their meetings all month long. Visit <https://namict.org/find-support> for more information.

A new Family Support Group is meeting on the second Wednesday of the month from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at St. Isidore and Maria at St. Paul

Church at 2577 Main St. For more info, contact Tina at 860-906-7385

A new Spousal Partner Support Group will be held on the 3rd Monday of each month at 7 p.m. Visit <https://namict.org/find-support> for more information.

WORK_Space hosting 'Perspectives of Home' exhibit

MANCHESTER — Perspectives of Home: An Exhibit & Experience about Home, Belonging and a Sense of Place will run from now through Friday, Feb. 25, 2022.

2nd Saturday Open Houses will take place on Dec. 11, Jan. 8 and Feb. 12, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The Galleries@WORK_SPACE are open for public viewing with free admission. Each day will include a special event related to the Perspectives of Home exhibit.

On Dec. 11, The Wit & Wisdom Poetry Club of Manchester will present original poems written on the theme of home, some directly inspired by pieces in the exhibit. Guests are welcome to attend the Poetry Club's meeting at 1 p.m.

Over 100 works were created by more than 40 artists, reflecting feelings of home, sense of place and how where we live impacts who we are. This exhibit includes material from a research study on the history of migration, settlement, housing, and community formation in Manchester.

Visit <http://workspacemanchester.com/events-programs>, email galleries@workspacemanchester or call 860-647-3168 for more information.

Holiday gift wrapping party taking place at library

MANCHESTER — A holiday gift wrapping party will take place from 6 to 7 p.m. or 7 to 8 p.m. Monday, Dec. 13, at Manchester Public Library, 586 Main St. Bring your gifts and the library will provide the wrapping paper, gift bags, tape, scissors, and more.

Festive music or a movie will be playing and the library will provide snacks and warm drinks. Registration is required for this free event. Call the Reference Desk at 860-645-0821 and sign up for one of the slots, which are limited to 25 people per time slot.

'Embracing Judaism' open house taking place virtually

MANCHESTER — Embracing Judaism, an introduction to Judaism for adults of all faiths (or none), will hold an online session on Thursday, Dec 16, for new and prospective students to meet the faculty and fellow students.

Contact Rabbi Richard Plavin at 860-573-4503 or riplavin@gmail.com to get a Zoom link and to request the time. The 2022 season will begin on Thursday, Jan. 6, via Zoom, allowing students from anywhere in the country to participate.

The instructors are Rabbi Debra Cantor of Bloomfield, Rabbi Nelly Altenburger of Middletown, Rabbi Randall Konigsburg and Rabbi Richard Plavin of Manchester, Rabbis David Small and Rachel Zerin of West Hartford. A recommended reading list will be provided for students to begin studying on their own prior to classes beginning in January.

'Embracing Judaism' is for Jews who want to learn more about their heritage and for non-Jews who want to better understand Judaism. The course is especially recommended for Jews and non-Jews in interfaith relationships.

Church offering Advent centering program

EAST HARTFORD — South Congregational Church, 1301 Forbes St., is offering "A Quiet Space for Advent Centering" on Wednesday, Dec. 15, from 5 to 6:30 p.m.

Visit the sanctuary, light a candle, listen to soft music, and pray or reflect on the gifts and/or the lessons of the season. This is a drop in, stay as long as you would like, event. To maintain a contemplative atmosphere, organizers kindly ask that you enter and leave the sanctuary in silence.

South Congregational Church is handicap accessible. Parking is available behind the building. Enter the church up the paved walkway from the parking lot. For information, call the church office at 860-568-5150.

Turn to Community News, Page 4

Courant Community

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Contact Courant Community Editor Erin Quinlan at **860-875-3366, Ext. 3030** or equinlan@courant.com.

Send press releases, community events and photos, news tips or letters to the editor to community@courant.com.

To submit Good Neighbor items, birthday greetings, engagement or wedding announcements, email community@courant.com.

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Connecticut's largest dairy farm taps into energy markets

By Stephen Singer

Hartford Courant

ELLINGTON — It's a common farm odor, but for Connecticut's largest dairy operator, cow manure is the smell of money.

In the complicated business of energy markets, manure produced from a herd of 3,000 cows at Oakridge Dairy in Ellington will be transformed into gas sold in New Jersey.

Oakridge and its partner, South Jersey Industries, broke ground recently on an anaerobic digester that will capture raw methane and other greenhouse gases produced by manure. In the process, bacteria break down organic matter such as animal manure, wastewater and food wastes in the absence of oxygen.

The \$12 million project, which is set to begin operating next September, will turn biogas into commercial-grade renewable natural gas added to the distribution system of Elizabethtown Gas, a subsidiary of the Folsom, N.J., company, and its 300,000 customers.

Founded in 1890 and in its fifth generation, Oakridge will welcome the new source of revenue to defray high taxes and rising costs for energy and labor, Chief Executive Officer Seth Bahler said. Local milk markets were once dominant, but Oakridge now competes in global markets, he said.

"We have to produce it more cheaply, and Connecticut is not cheap," he said.

Oakridge will not be lacking the raw material fed into the digester. A cow eats 100 pounds of food a day and produces 15 gallons of manure, Bahler said. Oakridge Dairy will still have plenty left to fertilize its 3,000 acres, he said.

For South Jersey Industries Inc., the Oakridge project will be the first in a portfolio of dairy farms to break ground in its partnership with REV LNG, a renewable energy project development and mobile energy services company.

SJI has other investment opportunities in Michigan and elsewhere, said Dominick DiRocco, vice president of external affairs. The gas produced at Oakridge will be liquefied and transported by truck to customers in New Jersey.

"There aren't many dairy farms in New Jersey," DiRocco said. "There aren't enough dairy cows to produce gas."

Agriculture accounted for 10% of greenhouse gas emissions in 2019, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The emissions are from livestock such as cows, agricultural soils and rice production.

Some environmentalists advocate for zero-emissions electricity from sources such as wind and solar as a better choice over methane transported through pipes and into homes. Methane leaks and the end product, burning gas, have a greater environmental



Some of Oakridge Dairy's herd of 3,000 cows. An anaerobic digester being built at the Ellington farm will capture raw methane and other greenhouse gases produced by manure and turn biogas into commercial-grade renewable natural gas. **CONTRIBUTED PHOTO**

impact.

Still, it produces much less greenhouse gas "than if you threw manure into a lagoon," said Matthew Freund, a co-owner of Freund's Farm in East Canaan.

Freund's operates one of the earlier digesters, dating to 1997, he said. It's a septic tank heated to the body temperature of a cow to replicate a stomach compartment and collect gas used to provide electricity for farm offices, a house, water and the digester.

Fort Hill Farms, a Thompson dairy farm, uses cow manure and restaurant waste to generate electricity sold to Middletown and New Britain. Part of a state program authorized in 2014, electricity production is initially used to reduce a farm's electric consumption, with surplus electricity used to reduce someone else's electric bill.

Kies Orr, a member of the fourth generation owners of Fort Hill Farms, said her father, who died in 2018, began planning an anaerobic digester about five years ago.

"My father asked how we can be sustainable and diversify to keep us alive," she said.

More farmers in Connecticut's small agriculture sector are showing interest in generating revenue by turning cow manure into energy. Although it's sizable, at \$4 billion a year, agriculture is a small part of the state's nearly \$295 billion economy.

Agriculture Commissioner Bryan Hurlburt said a few other digester projects are in discussions, and state legislation enacted this year streamlined the process for issuing permits.

Efforts behind the planning for the anaerobic digester at Oakridge took five years, much of it in negotiations with the state environmental officials said Foster, an Ellington Democrat.

Looking to require only a single permit, lawmakers this year enacted legislation to accelerate the permitting process. Rules related to hazardous waste and air pollution had previously taken the most time to win state approval, Foster said.

The number of farms in the United States with manure-based anaerobic digestion systems is small: 317 that reduce methane

emissions by collecting biogas from the degradation of animal manure, according to AgSTAR, a collaborative program sponsored by EPA and U.S. Department of Agriculture to promote the use of biogas recovery.

Dairy farms account for the most, numbering 255, with the rest on hog, poultry and beef farms.

Digesters are a pricey investment and require "quite a bit of maintenance," Freund said. They also require "somebody who's really interested in managing it."

"There are a slew of reasons why we're not getting more digesters," Freund said.

AgSTAR estimates biogas recovery systems could work for more than 8,000 large dairy and hog operations and could potentially generate nearly 16 million megawatt-hours a year, displacing about 2,010 megawatts of fossil fuel-fired generation.

"At the end of the day every farmer would like to do it on their farm," Bahler said.

Stephen Singer can be reached at ssinger@courant.com.



At a public hearing on Nov. 23, the Glastonbury Town Council unanimously approved a plan to add sidewalks on several town streets, including Spring Street, House Street, and Main Street. Peter Marteka

Glastonbury council approves sidewalk additions

By Steve Smith
Courant Community

GLASTONBURY — At a public hearing on Nov. 23, the Glastonbury Town Council unanimously approved a plan to add sidewalks on several town streets, including Spring Street, House Street, and Main Street.

The hearing was a continuation of a public hearing from October.

The sidewalks on House Street will connect to the multi-use trail, which ends there, near the Route 2 overpass.

Also in the construction proposal was sidewalks on Bantle Road.

Councilman Larry Niland said that there are two homes that are located on Cooper Drive but abut Bantle Road to the rear of their properties, but have no access to sidewalks.

"They would have to walk close to a quarter mile to get to their piece of sidewalk," Niland said, adding that if there is snow, there would be a problem if the neighbors' portion of the sidewalk is not cleared.

"I don't want to be fining people for not clearing their sidewalks," Niland said. "I don't want them to have a problem with the town because we put a sidewalk there, and they can't really get to it."

Niland suggested possibly moving the sidewalk to the other side of Bantle Road, but that would make the sidewalk the town's responsibility to clear.

"That's one more thing that we don't want to be doing," he said. "It's kind of a no-win, there."

Town Engineer Dan Pennington agreed that the snow removal could potentially be problematic.

"It is admittedly inconvenient for the couple of properties that have rear yards backing up against the proposed sidewalks, and snow removal is going to be inconvenient," Pennington said. "The other choices would be to put it on the east side, exclusively, where there is state right-of-way. That would necessitate the town clearing the snow and ice from the sidewalk, in accordance with the ordinance that applies, or you could choose not to put sidewalks at all."

Councilwoman Mary LaChance said that she empathizes with the homeowners.

"I wouldn't want to go around, trekking down the road that people use as a cut-through to try to clear a sidewalk," LaChance said. "I think that would be dangerous."

While it appeared that the council's consensus was to move the sidewalk to the east side of Bantle Road, Town Manager Richard Johnson said it could be problematic, in terms of the public hearing process, to change the Bantle sidewalk plan as written, and the property owner, which is the State of Connecticut, was not included in the plan.

Councilman Kurt Cavanaugh said he's concerned that the continuous loop of sidewalks in the plan would be disrupted, adding an extra place where pedestrians would have to cross Bantle Road/Spring Street.

The council voted unanimously to approve the sidewalk plan, minus the plan for Bantle Road, which would be revisited at a later date.

For more information, visit www.glastonbury-ct.gov.

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Parkville neighborhood is on the cusp of rising again as a 21st Century innovation district

By Kenneth R. Gosselin
Hartford Courant

HARTFORD — More than a century ago, Hartford's Parkville neighborhood buzzed with manufacturing turning out bicycles, typewriters and even automobiles, a Silicon Valley of its day.

The spirit of innovation is again taking wing in Parkville, with a new push by city leaders and the private sector to foster a 21st-century hotbed of startups, particularly in advance manufacturing and cost-saving technology for the insurance industry. This, they say, is a good fit with arts and culture that have thrived in Parkville for years.

The plans envision a neighborhood of not only early-stage companies but new apartments, more restaurants, a parking garage and entertainment venues — all existing together in a campus-like atmosphere a short walk from Pope Park and West Hartford's Park Road.

"We could be a Brooklyn, a small Brooklyn," said Carlos Mouta, a longtime developer in the neighborhood and the force behind the thriving Parkville Market. "So when I tell people I want to Brooklyn-ize Parkville, I'm not ashamed. I don't mind copying what other successful people have done."

Mouta's \$70 million conversion of the sprawling, former Whitney Manufacturing Co. on the corner of Bartholomew Avenue and Hamilton Street could be one of the first projects in the new innovation district, perhaps early next year.

The 290,000-square-foot, 3-story factory — about as much space as a Walmart Supercenter — would include 80,000 square feet for startups; short-term, co-living space for start-up visitors; 189 mixed-income apartments; restaurants and a beer garden. A significant boost could come to the district if the city

is successful in vying for up to \$50 million in grants over five years from the state's "Innovation Corridor" program, launched in October. The program is part of Gov. Ned Lamont's broader, "economic action" program to spur the state's economy, add jobs and revitalize cities.

The Innovation Corridor program stipulates that its funding contribute no more than 20% to a project, ensuring that there is strong financial commitment from other sources. The requirement seeks to make sure projects are economically viable.

Martin Guay, vice president of development at New Britain-based Stanley Black & Decker, said it is logical for Hartford to focus on manufacturing because of its roots in the industry.

But it also makes sense, Guay said, because New Haven has carved out life sciences and Stamford is focusing on digital.

Stanley Black & Decker, the tool and equipment storage giant, has partnered with the city of Hartford on the creation of the Parkville innovation district and is also a prominent corporate leader statewide in encouraging the growth of businesses that could result in more jobs.

"What the city gets — and the neighborhood — are projects that are invested in the city," Guay said. "Because ultimately, the people of the city need to win for the strategy to be viable. And the way they win are permanent, good-paying jobs and benefits that are created over time."

Stanley would likely benefit from working with the startups in the new district. The company has shown a willingness to collaborate with other companies. Its decision to hire HCL Technologies to handle its IT led to HCL establishing a presence in downtown Hartford with the promise of 200 jobs for the city.

Stanley Black & Decker had already taken a strong interest in Hartford. The manufacturer has established an advance manufacturing accelerator downtown and recently took the first steps in helping finance downtown apartment development.

Parkville is especially suited to an innovation district, proponents say, because it has the buildings, though some are vacant, others blighted. It also is close to amenities such as the Parkville Market, which is expanding, and a CTfastrak bus station. The area also is located in an Opportunity Zone.

Obtaining financing through tax credits, the Capital Region Development Authority, private lenders and other sources still will certainly present a hefty hurdle to clear. CRDA funding, for instance, through the State Bond Commission has slowed as Lamont has pulled back on borrowing through the sale of bonds.

The effort also will require more developers getting involved to diversify the sources of investment.

But Guay said he is optimistic that the first signs of redevelopment could come next year, with the district unfolding over the next five to seven years.

While an overall strategy for redevelopment is crucial, it will be equally important to just get a few projects off the ground to create a buzz.

"We need to hit singles and doubles before we hit the grand slam," said Peter Denious, chief executive of AdvanceCT, a private, nonprofit that seeks to foster business development in the state. "Let's agree on step one, use that as the 'Hey, look, this is happening. This is real' and build that and get it done. Then this begins to take on a life of its own."

Kenneth R. Gosselin can be reached at kgosselin@courant.com.

BUSINESS

Advocates press to make cannabis a lucrative opportunity for communities of color

By Stephen Singer
Hartford Courant

HAMDEN — As Connecticut prepares for the lucrative sale of adult-use cannabis, an advocacy group announced Tuesday it will work to make sure the new industry draws broad participation from Black and other underrepresented communities as called for in state law.

"All these out-of-state operators ... are coming into our state and they're coming into our state because they see the money that can be had and so we want to make sure that those funds are invested in our communities," said Andrea Comer, chair of the Social Equity Council and deputy consumer protection commissioner,

But translating that into action will be complicated. Those who want to be cannabis sellers must meet requirements for income, residency and business verification that will be approved next month by the council, Comer said at a news conference in Hamden announcing the Alliance for Cannabis Equity collaboration.

The Connecticut Community Outreach Revitalization Program, known as ConnCORP, and The WorkPlace, a Bridgeport-based workforce development group, announced the formation of the Alliance for Cannabis Equity to focus on economic opportunities, such as workforce training, for Black and brown entrepreneurs and workers.

Carlton Highsmith, board chairman of ConCorp, a New Haven economic development organization, said cannabis legislation signed into law in June by Gov. Ned Lamont will create thousands of jobs, dozens of new businesses and "millions, if not billions, of dollars of wealth."

Communities that were hurt by the war on drugs and are the intended beneficiaries of the law should benefit from the commercialization of cannabis, he said.

Over the past five years, as the General Assembly considered bills legalizing cannabis, the tenor of the debate shifted. Advocates

initially were focused primarily on tax revenue Connecticut was losing to Massachusetts and other states with retail marijuana markets.

But about two years ago, the emphasis shifted as lawmakers sought to address longstanding inequities. The law includes a "social equity" provision intended to provide those hurt by the prohibition of marijuana an expedited opportunity to enter the potentially lucrative cannabis market.

"We don't want fronts," said Fred McKinney, a principal and co-founder of BJM Solutions, an economic consultant firm. "We don't want these entrepreneurs in name only. We don't want these entrepreneurs exploited and we don't want the community to miss out on the opportunity to create wealth."

The first cannabis sales will likely be in 2023, she said.

Rep. Juan Candelaria, a backer of legalizing adult-use marijuana, said it's too early to tell if equity issues are being fully pursued. But he praised efforts to push the process along.

"I think that anything additional will add at least oversight that the provisions will be met," he said in an interview. "To put it together will take a lot."

Joseph Carbone, president and chief executive officer of The Workplace, said jobs in the cannabis industry are among the fastest growing in the United States. Cannabis jobs provide the "kind of wages to help make sure people are in the middle class of America," he said.

The cannabis industry will require numerous jobs in many areas: growing, selling and marketing marijuana, transportation and other skills that require different types of workforce training, Carbone said.

"The hardest thing that I have found in my 25 years at The Workplace is helping people to raise their expectations for themselves," he said. "That's the result of decades of discrimination."

Stephen Singer can be reached at ssinger@courant.com.

GOOD NEIGHBOR

Your reader-to-reader column

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WALKER: Seeking standard walker with wheels (not rollator) for indoor use for elderly man with balance issues. 860-280-7297.

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Manchester parents form Facebook forum to discuss solutions for bullying

By Jesse Leavenworth

Hartford Courant

Manchester parents have launched an online forum to discuss school bullying, a chronic and widespread problem and part of an overall increase in student misbehavior in the state and nation.

The members-only Facebook group is called Stop the Bullying in Manchester CT Public Schools (bit.ly/3rkCAJW). School Superintendent Matt Geary said at the Board of Education's Nov. 22 meeting that he had received communications about bullying and harassment and would work on a presentation about school climate and culture for an upcoming board meeting.

One of the messages to the superintendent was from the founder of the new Facebook group, who wrote that bullying has "gotten out of hand, and we cannot continue to stand by while our children are hurt in school daily."

"The community would like to do what we can to help OTHER than just talking to our children at home," the woman, who in a recent interview asked not to be identified, wrote. "None of the schools or the parents have the ability to change what is happening alone."

Geary noted at the meeting that her email referenced a recent story about a Louisiana high school where a group of fathers started a program called "Dads on Duty" to curb student fights. Bad behavior linked to the coronavirus pandemic has been rampant in some school districts in Connecticut and the nation at the start of this school year. Geary said the presentation will include potential opportunities for parents to get involved in bettering school climate, although not necessarily in a hallway patrol program like "Dads on Duty."

Bullying is far from a local issue. Researchers say the respite that many bullied students throughout the nation enjoyed during the pandemic has ended with the return to classrooms.

About one in five students in the nation experiences bullying, according to the latest statistics from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (stopbullying.gov).

In Connecticut, a 2019 survey found that 17.8% of students reported being bullied in schools — 21.3% among females and 14.3% among males. The same survey found 14.3% of students in the state experienced cyberbullying, 17.3% among females and 11.4% among males.

State law defines bullying as "an act that is direct or indirect and severe, persistent or pervasive" that causes physical or emotional harm to an individual; places an individual in reasonable fear of physical or emotional harm; or infringes on the rights or opportunities of an individual at school.

Bullying includes written, oral or elec-

tronic communication, "a physical act or gesture based on any actual or perceived differentiating characteristic, such as race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, socioeconomic status, academic status, physical appearance, or mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability, or by association with an individual or group who has or is perceived to have one or more of such characteristics."

"Cyberbullying" means any act of bullying through the use of the Internet, interactive and digital technologies, cellular mobile telephone or other mobile electronic devices or any electronic communications. The state also established a safe school climate framework meant to address bullying.

Kate Dias, president of the Connecticut Teachers Association, said she did not know if bullying has increased substantially, but teachers across the state have been working with students who need to relearn self-management skills after the disruption of the pandemic.

Dias noted that before social media was widespread, bullied kids could get some relief at home. At least their tormenters were out of their faces until they returned to school.

"Now, kids can't get away from each other," Dias said. "When there's a beef, they can go at each other 24/7 and that adds a whole layer to this that is really emotionally draining."

The best answer for teachers, she said, is to build relationships with students, while acknowledging that teenagers typically will not reveal what they don't want adults to know.

The Psychiatric Times reported this month that remote learning provided some protection for teens against bullying, which is more commonly done in person. The report cited a Boston University study that showed online searches for "school bullying" and "cyberbullying" — searches that historically correspond with higher rates of bullying — dropped by 30-40% in spring 2020 and maintained that level through the following winter. As students gradually returned to school this fall, searches about bullying increased, according to the report.

Violence has risen dramatically in schools across the country since classes resumed. From Aug. 1 to Oct. 1 this year, the National Association of School Resource Officers reported 97 gun-related incidents in schools compared with 29 in the same period in 2019. Also, more students have reported mental health problems related to the pandemic, so it's easy to connect the dots to a likely increase in bullying, said Mo Canady, executive director of the 10,000-member school resource officer organization.

Jesse Leavenworth can be reached at jleavenworth@courant.com.

Big plays help Rockville take 'Battle of Route 83'

By Steve Smith
Courant Community

VERNON — Fans of defense and punting enjoyed the first half of the annual "Battle of Route 83" between the football teams of Rockville and Ellington.

The teams went into halftime with a 0-0 tie, but the Rams prevailed, 27-7 with all points scored in the last two quarters.

The first half highlight would have been a 70-yard touchdown run by Rockville's Travon Edmonson, but it was called back on an offensive holding penalty.

On the second half kickoff, Ellington returned the ball for 50 yards, but fumbled it near the sideline, giving Rockville possession. A few plays later, Edmonson got into the end zone, with no flags, putting the Rams up, 6-0 (extra point attempt failed).

Three minutes later, Ellington quarterback Zachary Killoran threw an interception to Rockville's Hunter Ford, who returned it and scored, stretching the Rams' lead to 12-0, after a failed 2-point conversion run attempt by Deshaun Perry was stopped at the 1-inch line.

With 10:57 to go in the fourth, Ellington got its only score of the game with a gadget play - a touchdown pass from running back Dante Mangiafico to Killoran, making the score 12-7.

With 6:39 remaining in the game, Perry, also usually a running back,

threw a touchdown pass to Juneil Powell, increasing Rockville's lead to 20-7, after Perry's run for a conversion was successful.

Rockville sealed the deal with a touchdown pass from Perry on a fourth down play with 3:32 remaining, this time to Hason Green.

"One or two plays swung that whole game," said Rockville coach Erick Knickerbocker, addressing both teams at the customary awards presentation after the game.

"Hopefully, we see you guys again, and hopefully it's for a state championship," he said to the Knights.

Ellington coach Keith Tautkus, formerly an assistant for Rockville, named Mangiafico the team's MVP, and the Austin Tautkus Teammate award went to Killoran. Rockville's Teammate award went to James Wheeler, and the MVP for the Rams was Perry.

"We feel good," Powell said. "It was a team win. We all worked together. We know that this is an emotional game, and we just stuck together. We have a full head of steam going into the playoffs. We're ready."

Tautkus said that the fumble on the kickoff should have been called down by contact, and that may have been the turning point in the game.

"He was tackled by his shoestring, he hit the ground and the ball came out," he said. "They should have got that call right. Still, we didn't play well in the second half. We played well in the first half. Then we had a

bad throw on the pick-six. We came back and scored a touchdown, and we thought we were in pretty good shape."

Tautkus said he, as well as his coaches and players, knew the Rams were going to call a halfback pass, but couldn't stop Perry from connecting with Powell.

"We gave up the halfback pass. We knew it was coming, but we didn't play it well," he said. "We didn't do enough to win. It was those little things that add up and turn the tide one way or another."

"This is a huge win for us," Knickerbocker said. "We had some ups and downs this year. I tried not to be emotional going into this game. Keith and I were texting this morning, and we were both kind of crying. He's like a father to me. Him coming over and helping me start here was awesome. Him leaving really hurt, but I knew it was the right move for him, and I'm really proud of him for what he's done in Ellington to really turn things around and make this game really meaningful."

"We knew this would be a battle," Knickerbocker said. "We knew we'd need to make a couple more plays than them, and that's what we did."

At press time, Rockville (8-2) was projected to finish third in the Class M rankings, and likely to host a playoff game. Ellington (7-3) is the seventh ranked team.

For more information, including playoff schedules, visit www.ciac-sports.com.



Rockville's Deshaun Perry fields a punted ball. STEVE SMITH PHOTOS



Ellington's Phillip Vrakas tries to find a way between Rockville defenders Travon Edmonson and Deshaun Perry.



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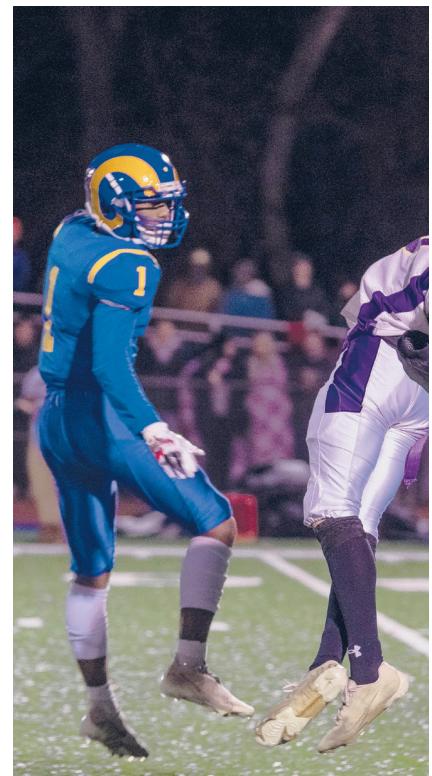
Ellington's Michael Bontempo fields a kick and looks for open space.



Deshawn Perry prepares to launch a pass that would be caught for a touchdown.



Rockville quarterback Matt Ryan aims at a teammate down the field.



Ellington's Elijah Miller stretches and nearly makes an interception on a pass intended for Rockville's Juniel Powell.



Ellington quarterback Zachary Killoran tries to get out of the grasp of Rockville lineman Henry Tyus, Jr.



Hason Green catches a pass before turning and running in for a Rockville touchdown.



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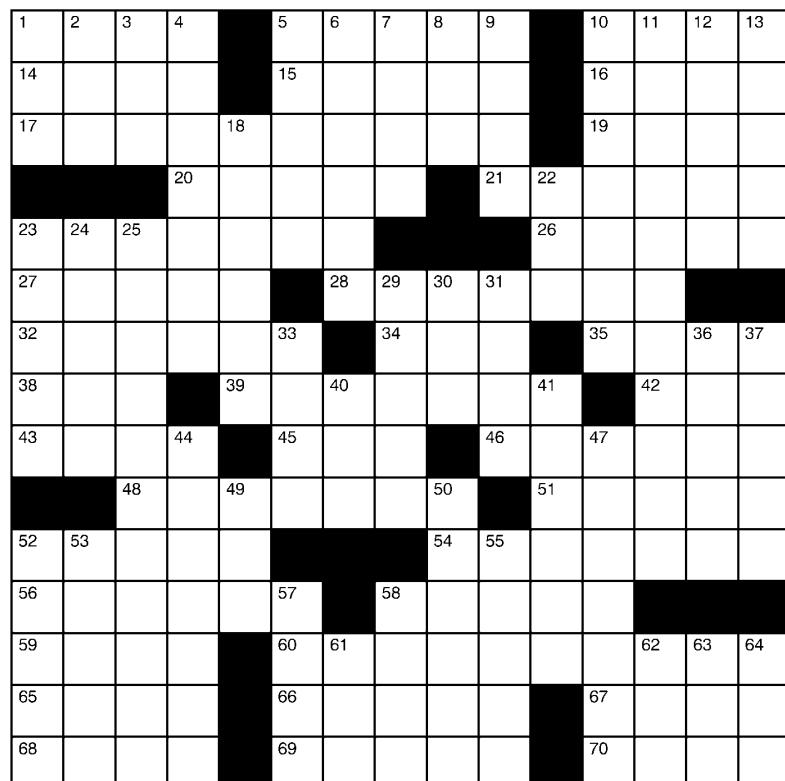
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LOCAL NEWS

CROSSWORD Solution located elsewhere in this section

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By Charles Preston

Community News

from Page 4

annual Toys for Tikes drive. Each Christmas the firefighters distribute these toys to the community's less fortunate children.

Toys will be collected through Friday, Dec. 17. New, unwrapped toys can be dropped off at any of the following locations: Asymmetry Salon & Barber Shop, 378 Kelly Road; Big Sky, 47 Hartford Tpke.; Buckland Billiards, 1131 Tolland Tpke., Manchester; Casey's Café, 127 West Road, Ellington; Deyly Strength, 520 Hartford Tpke., Suite E; Evolution Hair Design, 110 Hale Road, #502, Manchester; Great Harvest Bread, 425 Talcottville Road; Opportunity Works, 45 West Main St.; People's Bank, 30 Hyde Ave.; Peoples Bank, 6 Pitkin Road; Rock City Tattoo, 20 East Main St.; Rockville Public Library, 52 Union St.; Rocky's Ace Hardware, 71-73 Windsor Ave.; Route 83 Auto Center, 133 West Road, Ellington; ShopRite, Tri-City Plaza; Spare Time, 350 Talcottville Road; Suburban Subaru, 14 Hartford Tpke.; Vernon Police Dept., Route 30 & West Road; ViVO Chiropractic, 520 Hartford Tpke Suite B.; and West Main St. Barber Shop, 17 West Main St.

Distribution to families who have pre-registered with Vernon Social Services will be completed on Monday, Dec. 20, after 6:30 p.m.

Financial donations can be sent to Vernon Volunteer Firefighters Association, Inc., P.O. Box 951, Vernon, CT 06066. Questions may be directed to the Vernon Fire Safety Complex at 860-871-7468, Option 2.

Foundation kicks off annual holiday campaign

AREA — The Max Cares Foundation's Roasts for the Holidays fundraising campaign raises funds to provide holiday food to shelters and soup kitchens that prepare and serve meals to those experiencing food insecurity in the Greater Hartford, Connecticut and Greater Springfield, Mass. regions. This year, the Max Cares Foundation will match total gifts to the campaign up to \$25,000.

Now through Dec. 31, diners can support Roasts for the Holidays while visiting any Max Restaurant Group location by simply adding a charitable contribution to their check at the end of their meal, or to any take-out order placed via the individual Max Restaurants websites.

Participating Max Restaurants include Max Downtown and Trumbull Kitchen in Hartford; Max's Oyster Bar, Max Burger and Savoy Pizzeria & Craft Bar in West Hartford; Max-A-Mia in Avon; Max Fish in Glastonbury; Max's Tavern in Springfield, Mass.; and Max Burger in Longmeadow, Mass. Tax-deductible donations can also be made online at maxcaresfoundation.org or at MaxRestaurantGroup.com/Store.

Other charities that have received Roasts for the Holidays support in previous years include Loaves & Fishes, The Open Hearth, Interval House, and Mercy House & Shel-

ter, in Hartford; Catholic Charities of Hartford; Hands on Hartford; Hartford Rescue Mission; Open Pantry Community Services in Springfield; Springfield Rescue Mission, and Lorraine's Soup Kitchen and Pantry in Chicopee. For 2021, Max Cares Foundation is seeking additional soup kitchens and shelters in Greater Hartford and Greater Springfield to be Roasts for the Holidays beneficiaries. Area non-profits can write to info@maxcaresfoundation.org to express interest. Visit <https://www.maxcaresfoundation.org/roasts-for-the-holidays> for more information.

Library hosting crafts, pictures with Santa

ENFIELD — WINDSOR LOCKS — The Windsor Locks Public Library, 28 Main St., presents the following programs. Visit <https://www.windsorlockslibrary.org/> or call 860-627-1495 for more information.

Drop by the library any time during open hours to make a cute Santa craft, from now through Saturday, Dec. 11. The craft is best for ages three to eight and no registration is required.

Pictures with Santa outside the library will take place from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 11. Make a Santa craft or color while you wait in the children's room. This program is for children of all ages. Cost is \$2 per click.

Drop by the children's room to make a gingerbread man puppet craft from Monday, Dec. 13, through Saturday, Dec. 18, during open hours. The craft is best for ages three to eight and no registration is required.

Windsor Art Center hosting art tag sale, fundraiser

WINDSOR — The Windsor Art Center, 40 Mechanic St., is hosting an art tag sale and fundraiser. Original art, prints, framed, and unframed works are available. Most items are in the range of \$10 to \$25. All proceeds from this fundraiser will help sustain and support the mission of the art center.

Those who become a member will get first choice on Friday, Dec. 10, from 6 to 8 p.m. Register at www.windsorartcenter.org or visit the art center during open hours.

The art tag sale schedule is 6 to 8 p.m. Friday, Dec 10 (Members' Preview), 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, Dec 11, and 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Sunday, Dec 12.

American Legion welcomes veterans to Christmas party

WINDSOR LOCKS — Gensi-Viola Post No. 36, The American Legion of Windsor Locks, will host its annual Christmas party on Saturday, Dec. 18, at 6:30 p.m. All members of the Post, Auxiliary and Families as well as all area veterans are welcome. The menu includes a complete ham dinner.

The cost is \$8 for adults and \$5 for children under the age of 12, plus \$7 worth of groceries in support of the Windsor Locks Food Bank.

Hartford Courant

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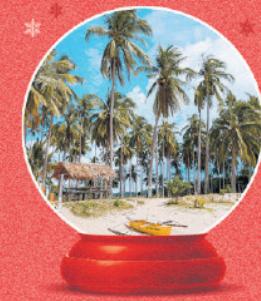
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The 7-passenger stretch

By William Heald

Special to Courant Community

When it comes to iconic Jeep models, the mind typically jumps to what is now known as the Wrangler.

But there is another seasoned veteran that has been around for decades, although you could argue it has evolved quite a bit more: the Cherokee. The name had been used starting in 1974 with a two-door pickup-based SUV, and while well-received the vehicle that really launched the Cherokee name world-wide was the 1984 model.

This was a real departure for Jeep, for instead of a body-on-frame architecture it boasted a unibody design that continues to this day. This turned out to be a very popular vehicle, and Jeep sold them in huge numbers. The Grand Cherokee is a larger version that has been popular since its introduction in 1993. Steadily refined over the years, the 2021 Grand Cherokee has introduced another substantial change from the traditional Grand Cherokee: three-row seating for up to seven passengers.

The new Grand Cherokee L rides on a stretched 121.7-inch wheelbase (the regular Grand Cherokee is 116.7 inches; the Cherokee 106), and comes in Laredo, Altitude, Limited and Trailhawk trim levels. Engine choices include a 3.6-liter Pentastar V6 with 293 horsepower, a 2-liter turbocharged inline four assisted by an electric motor for a total output of 375 horsepower, and a 5.7-liter V8 with 357 horsepower.

The transmissions throughout the range are 8-speed automatics, and in typical Jeep fashion there are two different 4WD systems

available depending on the trim level. We tested a Limited model with the Pentastar V6, and it was festooned with a full-time AWD system that had no low range but did have a multi-terrain select knob including sand/mud, auto and snow modes. Acceleration is immediate and satisfying, thanks in large part to the very smooth-shifting transmission. The chassis feels solid, although not to the degree that body-on-frame SUVs impart.

With this drivetrain, the Grand Cherokee L can tow 6,200 lbs. It's notable that Jeep has a very elaborate air suspension option that adds much more versatility and off-road ability to this already stout architecture.

The real advancement in this latest Cherokee lies within, in the very spacious interior. The front buckets are very well-contoured and in Limited trim the Luxury Tech Group includes Capri leather upholstery with perforated inserts (comfortable and quite durable). The instrument cluster is purely virtual with analog gauges that change in size depending on when the trip computer is activated. It's entertaining, but as to its real functionality that's a different matter.

The second row on our six-passenger Limited had very roomy, accommodating captain's chairs that both slide and recline. The fact that there is a small aisle between the seats affords easy access to the third row, which despite a high floor offers acceptable room for two adults. The L designation does make the Grand Cherokee a true three-row vehicle, so it's definitely more versatile than the standard version. EPA numbers are 18 city/25 highway, and with options our sticker came to \$52,685. www.jeep.com



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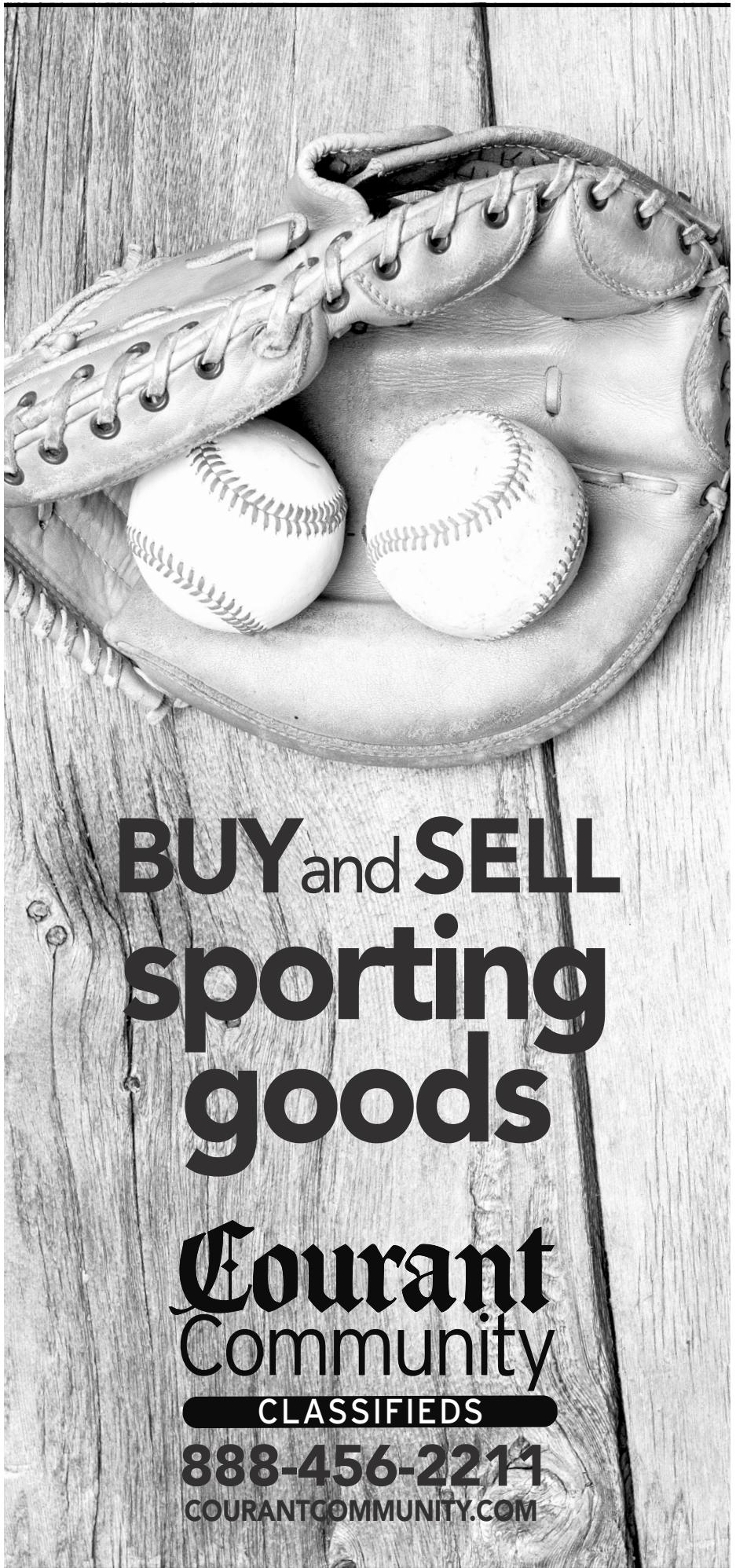
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Plant Evergreens for Holiday Decorating

By Dawn Pettinelli, UConn Home & Garden Education Center

With the holiday season upon us, many choose to decorate their homes, both inside and out, with fresh cut greens. This year why not try your hand at creating an evergreen swag, tabletop arrangement, wreath, or filling your window boxes with fresh cut greens from your yard or surrounding areas (with permission, of course). Making holiday decorations can be simple, satisfying, and a great way to spend some time outdoors and maybe, do some much needed pruning.

Over the years, I have planted a good number of broad and needle-leaved evergreens both for their landscape value and as fodder for holiday decorating.

You may wonder how this custom of cutting and displaying evergreen branches came to be. Bringing in branches of evergreens during the short, dark days of December was practiced in pre-Christian days by inhabitants of northern European countries. This was done to ward off evil spirits. Trees that held their needles throughout the cold winters symbolized the earth's fertility and eternal life. They served as a reminder that the earth would become green again.

Evergreens are pretty much a staple in foundation plantings. You may even have an evergreen hedge, mixed shrub border, or a few specimen shrubs or trees. Of course, if you want to have greens for the holidays it makes sense to wait until December before pruning them. While this may not be the optimal time of year, my plants seem to do quite well if a few branches are judiciously removed for decorative purposes. The majority of the pruning; however, is done in summer after new growth is fully expanded.

Whether planning a new planting, renovating an old one, or deciding on a shade tree or specimen shrub, consider varieties suitable for holiday use. If it is scent you are after, balsam fir is hard to beat but most evergreens emit a fresh, woodsy aroma. Balsam fir will grow into a good sized tree unless you decide to use it for your Christmas tree. Fraser and white firs are also excellent candidates for a tree or greens.

Almost any species of pine is suitable for decorative use especially if you choose the young growth. Hemlock is very attractive but loses its needles quite rapidly if placed in warm temperatures. Spruces are lovely but prickly to work with. A recent speaker at our garden club suggested that putting on a pair of those disposable gloves will enable you to handle the spruce without getting stuck by the needles. A good number of yards are homes to yews, junipers and arborvitae. Some varieties are better for decorative purposes than others. Leave the ground-hugging junipers alone though.

For gold tipped foliage, quite attractive indoors or out, consider adding a false-cypress (*Chamaecyparis pisifera 'Filifera'*) or related plant to the landscape next year. These fine-textured plants can get somewhat open with age attaining a height of 4 to 20 feet.

Use other evergreen plants in mixed arrangements. Look for wayward branches of boxwoods, hollies, andromeda, mountain laurel, euonymus (especially the variegated types) and evergreen azaleas. Staghorn sumac berries, rosehips (not from multiflora roses) and winterberry fruits as well as pinecones and other seed pods can be used to accent your decorations.

When cutting for decorations, choose well formed branches with thick foliage. For small indoor arrangements, one might want to rinse the branches to remove dirt and insects. Stems can be recut and placed in water for several hours before arranging to keep them fresh. When creating outdoor swags, window boxes or other containers, generally these steps are skipped and the freshly cut greens are just used as needed.

A swag is probably the easiest and simplest of holiday decorations. It is basically a grouping of evergreen branches tied together in a pleasing manner. Branches can simply be wired together but beginners might benefit from using a wire coat hanger stretched vertically so that the hook can be used as a hanger.

For a swag, cut at least 3 pieces of greenery 18 to 24 inches long and 6 to 12 shorter pieces. Attach the 3 longer pieces to the coat hanger with the longest branch forming the center. The shorter branches can be wired on each side to increase the fullness of the swag. Fill in as needed with more branches of greenery and finish with a bow, a few springs of holly, cones or ornaments using thin green florist wire to attach.

Be adventurous and make a holiday swag or other arrangement this year. Perhaps your evergreen decorations, inside or out will become a family tradition. The quantity of evergreen material right in your own yard may surprise you. Just remember to prune wisely and add another evergreen or two each year for fuller and more varied arrangements.

For information on selecting and growing evergreens or on other gardening topics, feel free to contact us, toll-free, at the UConn Home & Garden Education Center at (877) 486-6271, visit our website at www.ladybug.uconn.edu or contact your local Cooperative Extension center.

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